



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS

COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE

June 4, 2007

Address Reply to

Win Stebbins, Chair
Technical Committee on Environmental Design
Michigan DOT 517 373-2246

To: Carolann Wicks, Delaware DOT & Chair, Subcommittee on Design

Technical Committee on Environmental Design (TCED) Annual Report to AASHTO Subcommittee on Design (SCOD) June 12, 2007

Overall TCED Recommendations:

- 1. Request that SCOD Appoint the TCED Chair as a Non-Voting SCOD Member**
- 2. Recommend that SCOD Utilize E-Mail, Phone, and Web Meetings to Improve 2-Way Communication**
- 3. Recommend that SCOD Assign CSS to all Sub-Committees and Technical Committees**

Opening Comments about the Technical Committee on Environmental Design:

TCED has a multidisciplinary membership comprised of about 1/3 Design, 1/3 Landscape Architects, and 1/3 NEPA staff (see attached duty list). About half of TCED's members are not located in their DOT's Design Division. We meet twice yearly for 2-3 days which include at least 8 hours of TCED business and pertinent presentations from TCED members and from the host DOT, plus 1 or 2 afternoon field trips showing the host DOT's activities of interest to TCED members.

Meeting attendance is usually about 70-80% membership (with only 1-2 spouses), plus 5-8 staff from the host DOT and guests (local FHWA, Natural Resources, etc). Our 3-day Registration Fee for meals, meeting, and trips is about \$125-\$150, and our hotels are about \$65-\$100 per night. We have used speakerphone to accommodate those who cannot attend the business portions of our meetings.

TCED members have much group and individual E-Mail and phone call discussion between meetings; the interim topics show up on the next Agenda for discussion by all. Members volunteer themselves and their DOT to host a future TCED meeting when they have something to show other members; our twice-yearly Spring and Fall meetings are scheduled through Fall 2008.

TCED items the Subcommittee may need to ballot in the near future:

Balloting sometime in 2009: Rewrite of the 1991 Guide for Transportation Landscape and Environmental Design. TRB's Landscape and Environmental Design Committee AFB40 initiated the current rewrite by NCHRP Project #15-33, knowing that TCED will be the reviewer and the entity to recommend the product to AASHTO for Adoption through SCOD Balloting. Two active TCED members are on the NCHRP Review Panel; one of the two is Chair of the rewrite. At TCED's meeting May 7-10, 2007, we agreed to review and comment on the draft chapters/ sections in the same 2-3 week review timeframe as the NCHRP Panel, to eliminate unnecessary rewrites and eliminate a 2nd separate review(s) by TCED after NCHRP approval.

TCED items of potential controversy that TCED wants discussion on:

1) Unreasonable SCOH/SCOD Eligibility Requirements for Elected Chairs of multi-disciplinary Technical Committees like TCED. Requiring the Elected Chair have dual membership in SCOD eliminates 2/3rds of TCED members from becoming TCED Chair. TCED is currently and has been for 10+ years comprised of about 1/3 Designers, 1/3 Landscape Architects and 1/3 NEPA Staff; this cross-disciplinary membership has benefited AASHTO in the three latest products we participated in: Visualization (web on-line document), NCHRP Report 480, and AASHTO's A Guide for Achieving Flexibility in Highway Design. I understand only 4 of the 40+ Technical Committees under SCOH are multi-disciplinary and thus only 4 TCs are negatively affected by the SCOH/SCOD Chair rule, and that all 4 multi-disciplinary TC's report to SCOD.

TCED requests that SCOD appoint the Elected Chair (and possibly Vice-Chair) of TCED and any of the other 3 TCs (Hydrology & Hydraulics, Pavements, and Value Engineering) with multi-disciplinary membership from other than only Design as a non-voting SCOD Member to allow each TC member an equal chance to become Chair if elected by their peers.

2) Lack of letter, phone, or E-Mail communication between SCOD and this Technical Committee in past 5 years. Why do I as Chair have to look for and read SCOD meeting minutes I find on-line? I recommend SCOD actions be E-Mailed to each SCOD TC Chair. Why does the AASHTO representative to TCED surprise us at our TCED meeting telling of new SCOH/SCOD rules that have been adopted, but have not been E-Mailed to the TC Chair? SCOH met in early May 2007 and asked for input on a variety of items; as of today I have not received an E-Mail with those requests.

SCOH, SCOD, and Technical Committees need to post their minutes on the AASHTO website within 4-6 weeks of any meeting, and automatically send an E-Mail to Officers and TC Chairs telling of the Posting (or send the posting with the Notification E-Mail).

3) Lack of letter, phone, or E-Mail communication after/if you have received the annual and semi-annual status reports that each TC is asked to make prior to other SCOH and SCOD meetings. I have never received any direct or indirect feedback from SCOD

about any of my TCED reports to you during the past 5 years. What use do you make of the similar annual and semi-annual status reports, or where do you share them? If TCED is doing that great a job, it would be nice to hear from you!

Again, this shows the long-term lack of 2-way communication.

4) Lack of letter, phone or E-Mail response to my December 2006 and January 2007 TCED objections and suggestions for alternate methods to improve communication with SCOD short of requiring dual membership. I E-Mailed TCED's objections and input to the SCOD Study Team mentioned in the June 2006 SCOD minutes I found on-line. I still haven't received an E-Mail or phone call saying "Thanks, we will discuss it at our next meeting and get back with you."

SCOH and SCOD leadership need to learn how to use E-Mail and reply to those making input. Communication is two way.

5) AASHTO must find new revenue sources to fund new research, in face of younger DOT, consultant, and university staff who utilize .pdf material on their cell-phones, not printed publications. AASHTO must offer material in .pdf format and reduce development and printing costs accordingly.

Digital material is preferred by younger people in any profession.

6) Offer your absent SCOD members and TC Chairs the opportunity to watch/listen and possibly speak via web conferencing at these annual meetings, to help those DOT members and TC Chairs who can not attend this annual SCOD meeting.

Offer a modern communication tool to your absent States and Technical Committees.

TCED requests direction from the Subcommittee:

TCED requests relief from the SCOH rule on Eligible TC Chairs, which poses a negative burden on TCs like TCED that have a broader membership than only from Designers. I am within 2-11 months of retirement from Michigan DOT and as Chair of TCED. At our October 2007 TCED meeting we will elect a new Chair, most probably not fitting the new SCOH/SCOD rule. TCED's current elected Vice-Chair is in the NEPA area at Wyoming DOT, so your rule says his 15 years on TCED (almost perfect attendance) and the past 5 years as Vice-Chair co-leadership now mean nothing? Only one current TCED member, Keith Purvis from Mississippi, is also a formal member of SCOD but Keith is relatively new to TCED.

Since maybe none of you know of our Suggestions in my earlier E-Mails on this TC Chair subject, let me briefly restate three ways SCOD could allow the 4 multidisciplinary Technical Committees under SCOD to continue to elect their Chair and Vice Chair from their entire membership:

- 1) Expand SCOD membership by four or eight to automatically include the elected Chair and Vice-Chair of any SCOD's 4 multidisciplinary Technical Committees as a non-voting SCOD member, thus making them conform to the SCOH rule.

- 2) Exempt your 4 multidisciplinary Technical Committees from this very limiting SCOH/SCOD rule on who may be elected Chair by their peers; allow the rule to remain for those TCs all of one Design discipline.
- 3) Since SCOD allows up to three named SCOD members from each DOT, direct your members to allow a TC Chair or Vice-Chair (if a non-SCOD person) to be added as one of the three DOT members allowed, even if the TC Chair or Vice-Chair is not directly in the DOT's Design organization.

I request "Better Communications" between SCOD and TCED, to benefit the next Chair and Vice-Chair of TCED and other TCs. It will take more than 'a SCOD member as Chair' to create better communications between SCOD and your 12 Technical Committees; I'm glad my E-Mail and phone number are listed on the AASHTO website for the public to call me, because you in SCOD Leadership don't seem to know how to reach TCED's Vice Chair or me.

TCED input on Context Sensitive Solutions in AASHTO:

After considering the three options for CSS activity presented by SCOH last month as relayed by our AASHTO Liaison (why no E-Mail to TC Chairs?), TCED recommends the following CSS activities occur within AASHTO:

AASHTO should assign CSS to all Subcommittees throughout AASHTO to be a meeting topic for the next 3 years, and similarly assign to most TC's (CSS might not be appropriate for some TCs like Pavements); work with FHWA on training and benefits; and work to have NexTEA weave CSS into existing NEPA and Design processes. While these actions are occurring nationally, AASHTO, FHWA, and State DOT Executives should keep mentioning and championing CSS at their DOT and at every conference and gathering, in word, projects, and awards. DOTs need to keep their CSS message front and center, and not allow the initial CSS emphasis to lapse.

The CSS process advocates 'involving stakeholders'; thus all of AASHTO, SCOH, and SCOD need to be actively engaged and involved; CSS should not be placed in one group or another, nor be the subject of a Special Task Force. Peer Reviews and Scan Tours are effective ways for DOTs to learn from others' successes. Many of TCED's member state DOTs have learned that their DOT's CSS Policy to obtain early Citizen and Stakeholder input directly relates to better CSS items on individual projects, thus there is a need for Executives and Working Staff to discuss CSS at all AASHTO levels.

TCED members strongly believe that DOT Executives need to know & be reminded what the CSS Process entails and why it is beneficial to a balanced transportation program, and that DOT Staff need to know how to successfully implement the CSS Process on the full variety of all DOT projects. Education allows practitioners to see the good of CSS, and CSS will become part of the DOT's Doing Business. Continue education by working with what DOTs have; don't create a new spoke. Five TCED members are their state's named CSS leader or participate in their states' CSS Team.

TCED plans for future work items:

TCED desires to work with the Technical Committee on Hydrology & Hydraulics to develop guidance wording for DOTs to reflect alternate stormwater retention methods and uses now being tried nationwide.

TCED desires to work with whatever AASHTO groups are assigned Context Sensitive Solutions, to share CSS experiences of 5 TCED members that are either their DOT's named CSS point person or serve on their DOT's CSS Team. 'Highway Context' is usually thought of in human terms, but applies just as well to natural and wildlife contexts also.

TCED desires to work with FHWA and AASHTO on the subject of Green Highways, by inventorying what our TCED DOTs activities are doing in this new area before suggesting other DOTs list their Green Highways activities.

TCED will continue to meet twice yearly hosted by a member's DOT that has an Environmental Design project to show other TCED members. We currently have meetings scheduled Oct 2007 in Vermont, Spring 2008 in Maryland, and Fall 2008 in Idaho.

AASHTO will continue to be recognized for its national leadership and technical advancement in the current century as it was in the past, if it's Technical Committees prepare timely web-based reports on new subjects affecting the local, national and international transportation scene.

Thank you John Narowski, 11-year TCED member, for reading (portions of) TCED's input at the SCOD meeting in your home state. I am unable to travel to Vermont to personally present our report, suggestions, and comments.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of current, future, and previous members of the Technical Committee on Environmental Design, offering SCOD a multi-disciplinary approach from Designers, Landscape Architects, and NEPA perspectives reflected in our verbal discussions and written products.

Win Stebbins, Chair SCOD Technical Committee on Environmental Design
Michigan DOT, Design Division
11-year TCED member, 5-year Chair.

cc: Group Studying SCOD Structure and Technical Committees:
Bob Walters, Arkansas; Kathleen Penny, District of Columbia; Joe Bucik, Ontario

Mark Van Port Fleet, Engineer of Design, Michigan DOT

Tim Stark, Wyoming DOT 12-year TCED member & 5-year Vice-Chair

John Narowski, Vermont AOT & TCED member

Keith Purvis, Mississippi DOT & only TCED member also a member of SCOD

Other TCED Members

Dave Henderson, NCDOT, & Chair of TC on Hydrology & Hydraulics

Dan Dawood, PennDOT, & Chair of TC on Pavements

Kurt Lieblong, FlaDOT, & Chair of TC on Value Engineering

Subject:	Request for Technical Committee Update, Subcommittee on Design Meeting, June 10-14, 2007
Received:	Wed, 21 Mar 2007 11:58:08 -0400
From:	"McDonnell, Jim" <jimm@ashto.org>

Sent by Jim McDonnell March 21, 2007

To: Chairs, Vice-Chairs, and Secretaries of SCOD Technical Committees

The Executive Council of the Subcommittee on Design, which is developing the agenda for the upcoming subcommittee meeting in Burlington, Vermont, June 10-14, 2007, would like to formally request a presentation from you (or someone on your Technical Committee) updating the committee on your Technical Committee's activities and plans for the coming year(s), with an emphasis on the following items: items the Subcommittee may need to ballot in the near future; items of potential controversy that you want discussion on; and requests for direction from the Subcommittee.

Please let me know at your earliest convenience who from your Technical Committee would be able to give this short verbal update on your activities. Jim McDonnell

* **Title:** June 2007 Report to SCOD from the Technical Committee on Environmental Design

* **Presenter:** John Narowski, TCED Member from Vermont AOT (2-hr drive for 10-minute presentation, plus ability to hear all other reports; plus attend the SCOD presentations that day). Keith Purvis, another TCED Member from Mississippi DOT, will also be in attendance. Win Stebbins, TCED Chair, is unable to attend.

* **Date and Time:** Tuesday, June 12, 2007, 10:15 am – 11:30 am, Burlington VT

* **Session:** "Technical Committee Reports"

* **Time Allotment:** 8-10 minutes (some will be shorter, some will be longer)